

# CENTRAL BERKSHIRE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Volume 3, Issue 1

September 2003

Greetings again from the Central Office, and welcome to another school year. The dust is finally settling on a very different start, and it appears that students and staff are settling into a nice routine. Let's hope the DOE or the state doesn't throw us any more curves. And now, on to all the district news that's fit to print.....

## Welcome To Our New Coordinator of Professional & Curriculum Development – Debbie Bevan

Last year, our Title II-A grant funded a teaching position to provide assistance to our neediest cohorts of students at the elementary level. Darlene MacSweeney was hired in January, and worked closely with a number of teachers throughout all four elementary schools.

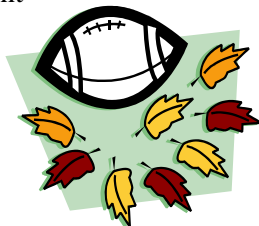
This year, our Strategic Planning Team articulated a different direction for this grant – more closely aligned with the grant's original RFP intentions (professional development, highly quality teachers, etc.)

Debbie Bevan applied – and turned out to be a perfect match for the position. Since being officially appointed, she has spent a great deal of time transforming Room 161 at Nessacus into our district's Professional Development Center. Please make it a point to drop by some afternoon.

Debbie is currently leading the district's curriculum mapping project. She is also offering her professional services to teach the regularly offered fall course. She will also begin to develop and/or coordinate other professional development offerings for teachers and paraprofessionals.

She can be reached at Nessacus (780) or email at: [dbevan@cbrsd.org](mailto:dbevan@cbrsd.org)

Welcome aboard, Debbie.



## Strategic Planning Process – An Update

Our Three-Year Strategic Plan, developed and submitted in three stages last winter and spring, suffered a minor setback this past August. According to our grant reader at the DOE, it was rejected as a full fledged three-year plan – but will be accepted as a one year interim plan. According to Barbara Soloman (Massachusetts Title I Director), only 12 school systems that applied received full approval. In a sense, that puts us in good company (with 200+ other school systems). Work will begin on refining and revising the plan on October 10<sup>th</sup> with a DOE sponsored NCLB event in Northampton.

According to Ms. Soloman, the DOE was never fully prepared in this new means of grant administration; as a result, the many workshops that we attended were, in effect, for naught. She mentioned that a new series of events are in the works for the school systems that chose to get on board this three-year cycle. Hopefully, they will be more productive and to the point. More to follow.....

## Curriculum Mapping Update

Phase I of curriculum mapping is well underway in Central Berkshire. Teachers have been busy projecting the content, skills, and assessments that will take place in their classrooms, month by month. Elementary and math teachers have concentrated on math and subject area teachers at the middle and high school level have been working on maps for their particular content area.

Bayard Klemasmith, our consultant, recently shared these thoughts with, “Although this initiative may not feel helpful to you yet, please be patient. Hopefully, on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> you will see that mapping produces interdisciplinary and cross district conversations that will help us educate all our students. Remember, the point is to understand the curriculum from our student's point of view . . . mapping is for the benefit of the student, not just the teachers.”

A team of facilitators representing elementary, middle, and high school and a variety of disciplines will attend all day training on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> in preparation for map sharing on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Further information on where to be and what to bring on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> will be forthcoming.

## Fall Course Information

The Reading in the Content Area course is well underway. Participants are exploring how to use pre, during and post reading strategies to assist students when reading textbooks. Teachers will leave with a “bag of reading strategies” to share with their students. Students will then be able to develop and use those strategies that are most beneficial to them.

Look for information on two new workshops beginning soon, **TEACHING GEOGRAPHY** and **SCIENCE in FOCUS ENERGY**. Each is worth 16 content PDP's.

News continued on the flip side →

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### COMMITTEE TO REFORM FOR '03-'04

Our first meeting of the year will take place on Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>. Past members are welcome (and encouraged) to attend. New members interested should join us for this important meeting. We will meet in Room 161 at Nessacus, the CBRSD Professional Development Center. Committee meetings are open to all staff.

### CBRSD CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Thurs., Sept. 25** – School Committee, BTES

**Wed., Oct. 1** – First meeting of the Curriculum Mapping Steering Committee, Room 161, Nessacus (All day)

**Fri., Oct. 3** – In-service Day – Wahconah - Curriculum Mapping

**Tues., Oct. 7** – Full-Day K Committee, Becket, 3:30

**Thurs., Oct. 9** – School Committee, Kittredge

**Tues., Oct. 14** – Professional Development Committee Meeting – 3:15 – Room 161 Nessacus



## "Standards Master" Assessment Moves Forward In Year Two

This week is an important one for *formative assessment*. In years past, we relied on the MAT8 assessment to provide important data on our students' achievement. Unfortunately, the MAT8's were expensive, took a full week to administer, and the results were never back before November. In addition, they did not correlate at all with our curriculum standards. This year, they were scrapped.

Our replacement, a software product called "*StandardsMaster*", is being implemented from grades 3-9+. Assessment events will be scheduled at least three times this year, and we are currently in the midst of the first one. The results from the 60 question assessment will be available immediately upon completion of the test.

According to the company.....

*Standards Master helps teachers & administrators:*

- Easily monitor every student's progress toward state standards.
- Immediately intervene to address areas of concern.
- Save time creating assessment items and compiling reports.
- Provide the optimal testing experience for students.
- Access and control critical student information.
- Identify specific areas in which students need help toward mastering state standards.
- Intervene quickly to address areas of concern.
- Save time manually scoring assessments and organizing assessment data.
- Boost student test scores.

Formative Assessment is a key tool finding its way into more and more school systems across the country. Let me quote from a short article I found on the web, and offer a link to the full article:

*Carol Boston: ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation; University of Maryland, College Park*

*While many educators are highly focused on state tests, it is important to consider that over the course of a year, teachers can build in many opportunities to assess how students are learning and then use this information to make beneficial changes in instruction. This diagnostic use of assessment to provide feedback to teachers and students over the course of instruction is called formative assessment. It stands in contrast to summative assessment, which generally takes place after a period of instruction and requires making a judgment about the learning that has occurred (e.g., by grading or scoring a test or paper). This article addresses the benefits of formative assessment and provides examples and resources to support its implementation. The full article can be found at:*

<http://edresearch.org/pare/getvn.asp?v=8&n=9>

Another good article can be found at:

[www.fairtest.org/examarts/winter99/k-forma3.html](http://www.fairtest.org/examarts/winter99/k-forma3.html)

## MCAS Results Are In

The results of last spring's MCAS scores arrived last Thursday. Overall, we improved across the board. I have chosen to average the two "main" subject areas assessed by the state (those that are currently linked to



*Pictured above is Bayard Klemas with hard working staff members at the August 28<sup>th</sup> In-service.*

the graduation requirement) and chart them below. Note that these charts show three year's worth of data – and note also that we are all moving students out of the right two columns and into the left two columns. Keep an eye on the Berkshire Eagle toward the end of the week for a snapshot of the other county schools' performance.

As always, I try hard to be accessible to your needs and concerns. Call or email me at: [pswem@cbrsd.org](mailto:pswem@cbrsd.org)

*Paul Swem*, Assistant

Superintendent

*The Professional Development Committee seeks your input into the content of our professional development efforts. PLEASE provide ideas!*

## Postscript & Other Issues Of Interest:

- With Kelly Adair's new position as Wahconah's Librarian, I have had to assume many of her duties and responsibilities. I have a great deal to learn, and so little time! Hang in there with your requests. Items that get to me via your BTI's will certainly be dealt with, but it may take a while.
- Our official site for curriculum mapping is: <http://cbrsd.rubiconatlas.org>

